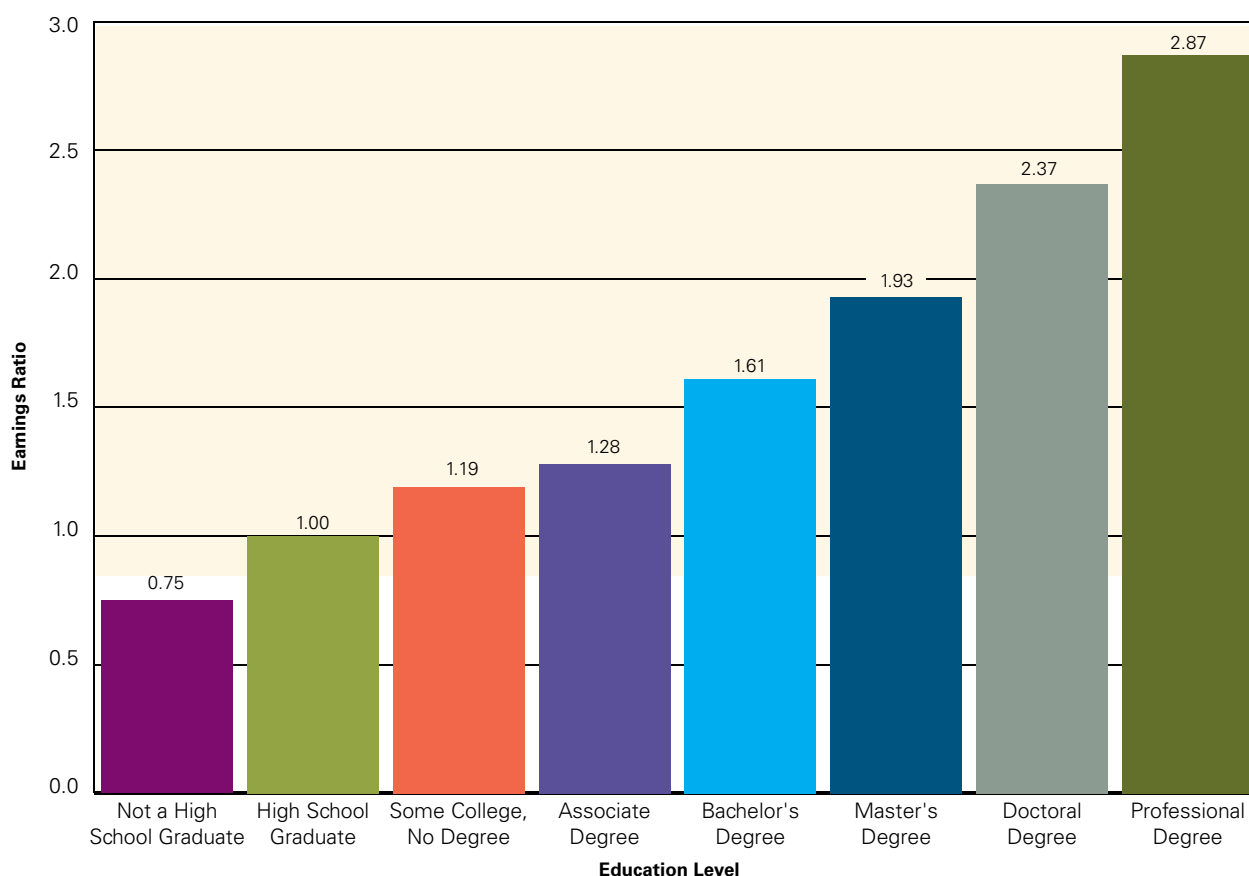


# Lifetime Earnings

**Figure 1.2:** Expected Lifetime Earnings Relative to High School Graduates, by Education Level



**Notes:** Based on the sum of median 2005 earnings from ages 25 to 64 for each education level. Future earnings are discounted using a 3 percent annual rate to account for the reality that, because of foregone interest, dollars received in the future are not worth as much as those received today.

**Sources:** U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, PINC-03; calculations by the authors.

The typical bachelor's degree recipient can expect to earn about 61 percent more over a 40-year working life than the typical high school graduate earns over the same period.

- Median lifetime earnings for individuals with some college but no degree are 19 percent higher than median lifetime earnings for high school graduates with no college experience.
- Median lifetime earnings for individuals with associate degrees are 28 percent higher than median lifetime earnings for high school graduates.
- Median lifetime earnings for doctoral degree recipients are between two and two and a half times as high as median lifetime earnings for high school graduates, and median lifetime earnings for professional degree recipients are even higher.

## Also important:

- The typical expected earnings over the working lives of four-year college graduates add up to \$800,000 more than the expected earnings of high school graduates. If college graduates who also earn higher degrees are included, the lifetime earnings premium is over \$1,000,000.
- Accounting for the fact that some of the higher earnings are many years in the future, the increased earning power of a college education is worth about \$450,000 in today's dollars. If college graduates who also earn higher degrees are included, the lifetime earnings premium is over \$570,000.